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Former NATO officer reveals Ukraine's military manpower is in tatters, losing 800 soldiers per day

12/28/2023 // Belle Carter // **3K** Views



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A prominent military analyst and former staff member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has disclosed that around **800 Ukrainian troops are being killed** and wounded every day while Kyiv is fighting Russia.

Retired Col. Ralph D. Thiele of the German Air Force, who used to serve on the personal staff of the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, put forward this claim in an opinion piece for *Focus* magazine. He argued that Kyiv needs to recruit more than 20,000 soldiers every month to replace its dead and injured. However, Thiele did not reveal his sources or basis for his calculations.

According to him, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's troops badly need additional personnel to be able to replenish its "workforce" on the frontline, so that "exhausted soldiers" may recover. The military expert who now heads the Political-Military Society, EuroDefense (Germany) and StratByrd Consulting think tanks also stated that the "highly motivated defense" and subsequent counteroffensive – which he described as "a thing of the past" – came at a "high price" for Ukraine as both manpower and hardware are "significantly worn out." He added that Western weapons systems are not miracle weapons and of course, they are wearing out.

Thiele also pointed out that the situation had turned into a conflict "of attrition backed by artillery" and that ammunition supplies were better organized in the Russian army. He cited NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's remark that Ukraine fired 4,000 to 7,000 artillery shells in a day, while Russia fired some 20,000 per day. These have also eaten away at the morale of the Ukrainian troops, who "will have to save ammunition in a war of attrition and endure slaughter at the front without rest and a greater sense of achievement," he stressed.

"Step by step, Russia's superiority in the conflict with Ukraine is becoming more visible," the analyst acknowledged. Moscow's strategy of attrition is effective in terms of personnel, material, ammunition and morale, he said.

In an interview with the U.K. publication *Economist* back in November, Ukrainian Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Valery Zaluzhny said that the conflict was at a stalemate and Ukrainian forces were unable to achieve a breakthrough on the frontline. A trench warfare-heavy conflict of attrition could drag on for years, he also said. Also, according to Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, Kyiv **lost more than 125,000 troops** and over 16,000 pieces of equipment in six months. Russia has repeatedly emphasized that Kyiv's offensive has failed, as Ukraine achieved no significant results. In recent weeks, the West and Kyiv have repeatedly said that the "counteroffensive" was not successful enough.



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Moreover, Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed that they are confident that their troops have the initiative. "In essence, we are doing what we consider necessary, what we want. Wherever... commanders decide active defense is best, it takes place. And where it is needed, we improve our positions," Putin claimed.

Zelensky: Biden will not betray us

Some analysts have observed that Zelensky has been falling back on his tried-and-tested tactic of [invoking a moral obligation](#) of his allies to help his country as he appeared to take a veiled stab at Washington. He seemed to have returned frustrated from a visit to the U.S. last week with no solid guarantees of more aid. U.S. President Joe Biden, one of Zelensky's closest allies, has already asked for \$61 billion in additional aid for Ukraine – but Congress has not yet approved it.

"I am sure that the U.S. will not betray us ,and that what we agreed with [Washington] will be fully implemented," Zelensky told reporters.

According to Mark Galeotti of the Russia-focused consultancy Mayak Intelligence, Zelensky invoking the word "betrayal" is part of the "moral blackmail" strategy that has worked well for him for the last two years. He warned, however, that this strategy can only go so far and is starting to wear thin in the West.

"I think it reflects the fact that not only was he disappointed by the outcome of his trip to the U.S., but it also left him looking weaker at home," Galeotti said. "He is meant to be the miracle worker, who goes and suddenly can unblock these kinds of problems."

The Ukrainian leader is under this pressure as he has arrived at a very different point in the war this time compared to last year. In 2022, Zelensky received a standing ovation in Congress and promises of billions in aid to help fight Putin's invading army. The Russian president, meanwhile, appeared to shun the spotlight as his army lost ground as he fended off challenges from within his ranks. But now, the roles seemed to have reversed as Putin seemed confident and victorious at a Defense Ministry briefing, while Zelensky looked beleaguered at a year-end news conference. The Russian leader sounded buoyant as he touted Russia's war effort at the briefing, surrounded by his top military brass.

Putin's display of confidence is hardly surprising, Galeotti noted. "He is in a stronger position now than he has been at any point since the invasion, so he has some reason to crow."
(Related: [EXPERTS: Putin wants to keep Ukraine out of NATO, not conquer it.](#))

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